



January 29, 2007

Senator Maryann Handley  
Representative Peggy Sayers  
Public Health Committee

RE: Proposed Bill NO: 5076

**Statement of purpose: To provide funds to the Department of Public Health to continue and expand a Fetal and Infant Mortality Program.**

Dear Senator Handley and Representative Peggy Sayers,

I am writing in support of proposed bill No. 5076 which will provide the funding to maintain the Fetal and Infant Mortality Review (FIMR) in the state of Connecticut. For the past 10 years, I have been the Women's Health Coordinator at Windham Hospital and the nurse practitioner who has run the Prenatal Clinic at Windham Hospital. In addition, I have been a member of the FIMR program since its inception here in our community. I have seen up close how poor birth outcomes can affect a family and a community.

The Windham Hospital Prenatal Clinic is a hospital-based outpatient provider that has been serving poor and underserved pregnant women in the Northeast corner of Connecticut for over 20 years. Windham Hospital is the only provider in this region that has demonstrated an ongoing commitment to providing prenatal services to this population. Our patients are high risk and are affected by many of society's ills including poverty, poor education, unemployment, inadequate nutrition, domestic violence, and substance abuse. Based on 2000 Provisional data from the CT State Department of Health, Perinatal Indicators for FIMR Programs, the Windham region has a high percentage (18.4% vs. 7.8% statewide average) of teenage pregnancies with over 15.8 % (13.4% State average) of pregnant women in this region receiving inadequate prenatal care and 19.3% (10.6% State average) receiving late or no prenatal care. Ninety-five percent of the women seen at the Prenatal Clinic are monolingual Spanish and all are uninsured. All of these factors have an impact on our patient's abilities to access appropriate pregnancy related services, ultimately impacting the course and outcome of their pregnancy as well as the health of their infant.

Based on 2000 Provisional data from the Connecticut State Department of Health, Perinatal Indicators for FIMR Programs, the Windham region has a high percentage (10.9% vs. 7.5% statewide average) of low birth weight babies, with 2.5% very low birth weight babies (1.6% State average) and 11.7% preterm births (10.1% State average). All of these factors and issues affect the rate of fetal and infant mortality and morbidity in our community. The clinic population is approximately 95% Latino with 95% of this group speaking only Spanish. Fifty percent of our clients are under the age of 19 and 80% are under the age of 25. Over 90% of our clients have a high school education or less. Approximately 66% of this population is first time mothers. A high proportion of the Prenatal Clinic population does not attend prepared childbirth educational classes and other related educational services held in the community.

Complex social and economic factors impacting our patients include lack of financial resources, social isolation, cultural barriers/myths, language barriers, cognitive abilities, lack of transportation, substance abuse and psychological factors such as depression and other mental illness. All of these factors have an impact on our clients' abilities to avail themselves of these educational resources. This in, turn, can lead to poor birth outcomes, which have an impact not only on the mother and baby but our community at large.

The overall goal of FIMR is to enhance the health and well being of women, infants and their families through improving community resources and service delivery systems to these families. FIMR brings together key members of the community to examine information from individual cases of fetal and infant death and low birth weights. The group identifies the factors that contributed to poor birth outcomes and develops recommendations for change and assist with implementation of change.

At a minimal funding level, the Windham FIMR Program acts as a catalyst of change and has proven to be a successful program, which has led to the overall improvement in the maternal infant health care delivery system for the Town of Windham. We are requesting the continuation of our 5 FIMR programs and to expand FIMR into other high- risk areas.

Thank you for your consideration,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'BEC', with a stylized flourish extending from the end.

Beth E. Cheney, R.N, M.S.N., C.F.N.P.  
Women's Health Coordinator  
Windham Hospital